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Many Westerners who comment on the relationship between Indonesian Islam and democracy are more interested in democracy than in Islam. This is a bias which we wish to contest in this concluding chapter.

This volume makes it clear that there is a will to embrace democracy on the part of many Indonesian intellectuals. It has also shown that Indonesian intellectuals are sensitive to their specific geography, and to the unique political trajectory their country has followed since independence. Indonesians are not sentimental about the brutal governments which have come to power in their country. Nor are they slow to note the pervasive culture of corruption which continues to subvert the potential of the country from within. On the other hand, they note, with justified pride, the contributions which Islam and Muslims have made to the development of democracy in the largest Muslim country in the world. This suggests, we believe, that a critically informed pride in Islam, and in its inherent rationality and universality, offers the best foundation for democracy in Indonesia (Azra 2006). On the other hand, Western political theory is an outstanding resource upon which Indonesians can draw in their process of renewal, as the chapters in this volume by Zifcak, Maddox, Patipan, Stokes, Thompson, Hindess, Kane, Crowder, and Camilleri demonstrate.

Our view of the need to rethink how rationality, democracy, citizenship, the rule of law and pluralism should be understood in political and legal contexts in Indonesia follows from this. In Indonesia, rationality needs to be understood in complex and
sometimes plural ways, and with reference to diverse religious traditions. Rational approaches need not be secular, nor need they be insensitive to religious pluralism and individual freedom.

The issue of democracy is often discussed in Indonesia in over-idealised terms – terms which map poorly onto institutions and practices on the ground. Once, however, it is accepted that Indonesian Islam and democracy are compatible in principle, there is much to be said for recognising that the struggle for democratic institutions is difficult in Islamic societies, as Bahtiar Effendy implies in his chapter in this volume. Actual political practice in Indonesia, as in other states, does not meet the high standards set by the Islamic call to justice, and more detailed and independent Islamic political thought is needed, as well as actual institutions that give this thought adequate expression.

Here, Indonesia could learn from the institution building of non-Anglo-Saxon nations such as Germany and Sweden. Looking wider afield is compatible with inculturating at home. And precisely because, as Ahmad Syafii Maarif argues in this volume, Islam remains on the whole a positive force in the democratisation process in Indonesia, better institutional models from around the would could make it possible to make better use of Islamic principles within Indonesia itself.

The case of citizenship, in comparison, is relatively straight forward. In contrast to the exclusivist statist understandings of citizenship which prevailed in recent centuries in the West; citizenship in Indonesia can be plural and reflexive, and take full account of emerging and historically innovative forms of citizenship, including religious and sexual citizenships (Hudson and Kane 2000; Hudson 2003; Hudson and Slaughter 2007). The need to thoroughly think through religious citizenship leads to conclusions which frighten some Western secularists, while the issue of sexual citizenship can be
rather challenging for conservative Muslims. How, for example, does Indonesian Islam deal with the rights of gay and lesbian couples? These are tough questions, but an Islam which tries to address them may prove compatible with the multiple life styles found in technologically advanced societies.

In the area of pluralism, Indonesians can learn, like every one else, from the work of Isaiah Berlin on the irreducible heterogeneity of moral values. Nonetheless, building such pluralism into Indonesian society will require concrete institutions, the adequacy of which will need to be evaluated by both particularist and universalist principles. Only institutions which capture the actual gravina of Indonesian history and social patterns are likely to really work. Meeting both particularist and universalist criteria will not be easy, especially since there are many universalisms and particularisms to contend with, and will require exactly the subtlety and flexibility in which Indonesians excel. In Indonesia, the views and values of Christians and other non-Muslims need to be respected and protected by concrete arrangements. This also means, however, that what works best in Indonesia may differ from what would work well in other parts of the Islamic world. In some cases, it may simply be a matter of following an international precedent; but in others, more complex and gradual mediations will be required.

As far as human rights are concerned, it seems clear that Indonesia Muslims will be able to embrace most of the purport of Western universalist claims in ways which respect their traditional values, even if the boundaries may prove difficult for some time. Here, as Fahdil Lubis argues in chapters in this volume, the rich political, legal and philosophical heritage of Islam provides important precedents. There is also much to be said for the view that Muslims who are nervous about human rights need to
be better educated in the complexities and nuances of Islamic traditions. These complexities and nuances arguably moderate arguments over-dependent on narrow minded trajectories, just as they challenge potentially complacent ethno-nationalist accounts of particularities of the Indonesian case. Among Indonesians, there is a tendency at times to lean too heavily on idealised and over-uplifting accounts of the history of Islam in the archipelago, or on Romantic claims about the unique trajectory of the Indonesian republic. A degree of nationalism here is probably healthy, but also needs to be moderated in due course. For related reasons, over-simple contrast between Indonesia and the Middle East should also be treated with caution, and it could be argued that in a range of cases Indonesian Islam can still learn much from of the historical experiences of Arabs, Persians and Turks. Manifestations of Islam deserve study wherever they are to be found, from North Africa to China.

The rule of law may be difficult to implement on the ground in Indonesia. Hence there is a need to make sure, as Brian Galligan argues in this volume, that the rule of law is understood in thick political and ethical terms, and with reference to particular political arrangements rather than merely as a set of legal rules. The notion of civil society has particular and profound pertinence to Indonesian developments, even if the rather special nature of civil society in Indonesia (most civil society institutions are Muslim) needs to be respected. As Philip Kitley argues in this volume, the historically specific intersections of civil society and the media in Indonesia make it possible for Islam to play the role of a public religion in a variety of cultural contexts, and this public Islam dimension could be developed further in ways which would help alleviate the concern of some Muslims that the country will fall into some form of American secularism. Indonesia is not, and should not be secular in the American sense, although,
like other modern states, it can explore forms of legitimate secularity in a range of political and social contexts. This approach is further strengthened once multiculturalism and the need for inter-faith dialogue are taken into account. In both these areas, Indonesia has learnt much from Western societies and in particular from Australia, its close neighbour.

Overall, this volume suggests that there are fewer differences in principle between the best informed Islamic thought emerging in Indonesia and Western political thought than might have been imagined. The major obstacles to Indonesia critically assimilating Western political concepts (in areas where it wishes to do so) are the relative weakness of Indonesian political institutions and the pervasive presence of corruption in particular domains and practices. Other obstacles include simplistic understandings of Islam on the part of some sectors of Indonesian society, and the short-sighted foreign policy adopted by Anglo-Saxon countries, including Australia, in the Middle East which motivates some Indonesians to be hypercritical of Western values and life styles.

In the longer term, it is likely that the way forward lies in better institutions and arrangements, including both integrity regimes to counteract corruption and the development of a richer public sphere in Indonesia in which major issues can be critically debated in informed and discursively rational ways. Islam itself is not in our view a problem, but, on the contrary, has the capacity to be a part of the solution if it is creatively developed in ways which are informed by a deep knowledge of Islamic traditions as well as contemporary Western political thought. Of course, such a sentiment may seem pious and impractical to Western scholars who have read too much Hobbes. However, it has tremendous resonance on the ground with both the
administrative intellectuals and the ordinary people whose support and help is needed if
democracy in Indonesia is to work.

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